

JUNE 15, 1972

Rep. Wilbur Mills has started a campaign through the Ways and Means Committee to close more tax loopholes. For the Shortgrass Country that means we are going to have to discontinue our habit of not reporting the stray dimes that occasionally are returned by pay phones.

The good congressman could plug all the tax loopholes left for herders with a piece of chewing gum. Hombres of substance do cover a few skid marks on their tax returns, but cometh the great reaper called the inheritance tax. it's all returned, plus more thrown in for good measure.

Tax advantages are being realized from the increase in predator animals. Shortgrass sheepmen gained a sizable deduction last year from coyote depredation. Reduction in income ran as high as 10 or 15 percent, while expenses incurred to fight the predators added an additional deduction in the expense column.

As the predators increase, the straight sheep outfits will become practically exempt from income taxes. I doubt if Rep. Mills is aware of the situation, but it could be a matter that he should look into.

The overall commerce in sheep producing areas should also start receiving a tax benefit from the same source. Everything from the super markets to the gasoline grinders should eventually note a decline in taxable income as the returns from sheep decrease. Income taxes could cease to be a problem among many businessmen. Wool warehouses, I'd think, would be in a favorable tax position.

What the improvement of ecology will produce tax-wise is unknown. I'm going to guess that the tax money a pack of coyotes and a pride of bobcats will produce falls somewhere in the range of the tax yield from an abandoned coal mine. However, normally my estimates run a little on the high side. So keep that in mind.

I just flat wouldn't be able to guess how much a flight of eagles could be taxed. Since they are a national symbol, they'd probably fall under the same exemption that's granted federal land, but that would have to be worked out.

Values on wilderness areas are equally vague and difficult to appraise. To determine the value of the hiking trails, for example, you'd have to figure the amount of wear they were causing on tennis shoes and then hang it on the tennis shoe business. I do know that the boys out west are awfully upset over the vast amount of land area that has disappeared from the rolls.

Critics of any of the tax programs claim that high taxes are going to be the ruination of the country. Sometimes it seems that the only fallacy in their statement is that the phrase "going to be" should be stricken. I don't know who Rep. Mills is trying to catch, but I sure don't wish him any luck.